

Malden Historic District
(Kanawha Salines)
Malden
Kanawha County
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-210

HABS
WVA,
20-MALD,
1

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HABS
WVA
20-MALD,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MALDEN HISTORIC DISTRICT

HABS No. WV-210

Location: Boundaries run from the south side of Georges Drive on the north to the end of Malden Drive on the south as it turns east just south of the south terminus of Planters Drive, and from the Kanawha River on the west to U.S. Route 60 on the east. The boundaries include the Turner Ratrie property (former J. Q. Dickinson & Company office building and dependencies) approximately one third of a mile southwest of the end of Malden Drive.

USGS Charleston East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.451345.4239109
17.451132.4238202
17.450744.4238300
17.450959.4239200

Present Owners: Multiple ownership

Present Uses: Residential, retail commercial, and religious

Significance: Malden, originally called Kanawha Salines, was the town that played the most prominent role in the development of the salt industry in the Kanawha Valley, an industry which spawned the considerable present-day industrial importance of the valley as a chemical-producing region. Malden is notable for the large number of early buildings, some dating from the 1830s, that remain, attesting to a degree of architectural formalism existing in the town earlier than in any other Kanawha Valley settlement because of the national importance of the salt works. The Malden Historic District containing the early structures was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on July 18, 1980.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The community of Malden was an adjunct to the exploitation of salt springs located in the Kanawha Valley. Salt had been obtained from these springs by Indians prior to the immigration of whites in the late 1700s. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, salt wells were producing considerable quantities of the sought-after commodity. The commerce was so lucrative and competitive that a group of Kanawha Valley manufacturers met in 1817 to establish a set of self-regulatory measures in order to perpetuate a profitable business climate for all, thus creating one of the first large-scale business trusts in America. Attendant to the production of salt was the improvement of drilling techniques both for brine wells and gas wells. The procedure for drying the brine to extract salt required fuel for heat, which local supplies of gas could provide. As a result of increased drilling activity, technical

advances evolved, serving not only the salt industry but later drilling operations in the development of the oil industry in America. The expansion of the salt-processing industry was substantially aided by proximity to a navigable waterway, the Kanawha River, which allowed Malden and its neighboring communities to become one of the primary salt-producing regions in mid-nineteenth-century America.

Having been known as Kanawha Salines during the early 1800s, the town was named Malden by the 1850s, the height of its commercial activity. As growing competition from other areas of the country combined with the devastation of normal commerce during the Civil War, Malden began to lose its position of power in the national market. During the 1870s, the fact that only one furnace continued in operation reflected the national economic malaise and foreshadowed the gradual deterioration of the traditional economic foundation for the Kanawha Valley. Even though the development of the salt industry at Malden eventually helped to spawn the assortment of chemical industries now situated in the valley, Malden did not share in this latter-day boom. By the late 1800s, the commercial activity which had lured residents of nearby communities to the town had begun to shift to the nearby city of Charleston. It was Charleston that also became the regional focus of industrial and governmental activity, leaving Malden little opportunity to match its rapid growth. In fact, very little expansion has occurred since the late 1870s, and the timelessness of the community is mirrored in the fact that it has not attempted to incorporate itself as a town since a short-lived attempt in the 1880s.

Thus, Malden has existed well into the twentieth century as a small nineteenth-century commercial, industrial and residential community. As the industrial activity withered, virtually ceasing in the 1950s with a fire at the major remaining saltworks, commercial interests likewise declined, so that today Malden is almost totally residential. The few commercial activities which do exist take place in very new structures having no relation to the earlier hotel and store buildings which are, save two, nonexistent.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The prominence of Malden prior to the Civil War and the relative lack of change during the ensuing century have left an architectural legacy extending back in time to the 1830s. The building types which are of most significance are in two categories--religious and residential. Of the former are the Kanawha Salines Presbyterian Church, 1840, and the African Zion Baptist Church, 1872. The traditional importance of churches to this small community of approximately three hundred people is further attested to by the Malden Baptist Church, 1876, and the Malden Methodist Church, originally built in the 1840s but rebuilt in 1911. As for residential sites, two scales of building are in evidence--the more imposing two-story structure, deriving in great part from the Federal style, and the cottage-scale house, either one or two stories in height and constructed in less durable, less costly materials. Of the larger, three extant buildings date from the 1830s--4406, 4208 and 4312 Malden Drive. At the cottage scale, a two-story example is 4001 Malden Drive;

while 4103 Salines Drive exemplifies the one-story scale, both houses dating from later in the nineteenth century. Other houses reflect parallel trends in nineteenth-century residential architecture, such as the Victorian fascination with decoratively carved wood around porches, as seen at 4402 Malden Drive, or the influence of such nineteenth-century ephemera as the chalet style, among the progeny of which 4006 Malden Drive belongs. In several instances, the earlier buildings have been completely enclosed by more recent alterations so complete that the former structure is no longer visible, examples being 4003 and 4305 Malden Drive. This last group is the exception, since most older buildings in Malden remain relatively faithful to their original forms. Of the early commercial buildings, two structures still exist. One is in the heart of Malden, that being a store (now a residence) at 4101 Salines Drive. The second is a small office building, formerly also the J. Q. Dickinson Company store, serving one of the salt-processing enterprises just south of the Malden residential district. Interestingly, this building still contains the offices of the company, now a manufacturer of industrial bromides on a very limited basis utilizing the brine deposits which gave Malden its now-faded industrial prominence.

There are 122 structures, not including dependencies, within the Malden Historic District. Forty structures have been individually recorded, and those records (HABS No. WV-210-1 through HABS No. WV-210-40) may be consulted for additional information on the Malden Historic District. Of the more significant structures, three are considered to be pivotal; the African Zion Baptist Church at 4104 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-6), the Richard E. Putney House at 4406 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-17), and the Kanawha Salines Presbyterian Church at 4305 Salines Drive (HABS No. WV-210-35).

The following structures are considered to make a major contribution to the Malden Historic District; 4004 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-1), 4006 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-2), 4208 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-10), 4312 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-15), 4402 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-16), 4401 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-22), 4205 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-27), 4105 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-29), 4103 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-30), 4003 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-33), 4001 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-34), 4103 Salines Drive (HABS No. WV-210-36), 4101 Salines Drive (HABS No. WV-210-37), 202 Wise Drive (HABS No. WV-210-38), 4212 Fallam Drive (HABS No. WV-210-39), and J. Q. Dickinson & Company (HABS No. WV-210-40).

Among other buildings evidencing the nineteenth-century character of Malden are 4306 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-13), 4308 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-14), and 4502 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-21). Of the 122 buildings (not including dependencies) in the Malden Historic District, 56 may be considered to be contributory structures. Although not as impressive as the nineteenth structures just listed, these buildings should be considered as a separate group in that their scale and execution emphasize the historic character already discussed. In some cases, these contributory structures date from the early decades of the twentieth century or have been somewhat altered (with aluminum cladding, for instance), so that their original fabric is not fully visible. Nevertheless, they remain appropriate to the district and are worthy of restoration and preservation.

Within the Malden Historic District, there are 22 buildings which may be considered as non-intrusive structures. These either do not belong to the

the period involved, or they have been altered so completely that their underlying structures are not visible, yet for various reasons they are not patently intrusive. Of the former group, such sites as 4412 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-18) suggest by their scale and massing a sympathetic response to neighboring older buildings. Such buildings do not fall within Malden's major historic era, but they do not destroy the visual impact of the district as would patently intrusive structures. Of the latter group, 4305 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-35), although obviously a product of the 1940s and not especially harmonious with its neighbors, contains within itself an early nineteenth-century building which is significant because of its having been built for one of the most prominent families of the region, the Putneys. Both types of building are considered to be non-intrusive, in that their presence is not altogether visually disruptive, or in that the particular building has important local historical associations.

The final category of twenty-five buildings consists of those considered to be intrusive structures having no value insofar as the historic nature of the district is concerned. They are considered to be patently disruptive of the character of the district. Of this last group, 4008 Malden Drive (HABS No. WV-210-3) is a representative example.

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August 21, 1979

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PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

"David Ruffner Built Church Ending 100th Year at Malden," Charleston Gazette, October 6, 1940.

"1836 House Restored to Past Beauty," Charleston Daily Mail, May 10, 1974.

History of the Presbytery of Kanawha, 1895-1956. Charleston, West Virginia: Jarret Printing Company, 1956.

Howard, James Murray. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, August 21, 1979.

Woods, Ruth Dayton. Pioneers and Their Houses on Upper Kanawha. Charleston, West Virginia: West Virginia Publishing Company, 1947.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) with funding from the West Virginia Department of Culture and History. The recording was completed under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect of HABS, in the HABS field office in Charleston, West Virginia. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1979 by James Murray Howard (University of Illinois), Project Supervisor; Donna Sue White, Project Historian; and Student Architects James Barrett Garrison (Carnegie-Mellon University) and Keith Edward Soto (University of Florida). The photographs were taken by Walter Smalling, Jr., Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service Photographer. The records were edited in 1981 at the HABS Washington office by Denys Peter Myers, HABS Architectural Historian.